

GNOSTIC ESCHATOLOGY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

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That a writing must be interpreted historically is one of the accepted canons of biblical exegesis ¹⁾. However, it is quite often in his effort to observe this canon that the New Testament exegete reveals an architectonic of method. That is, because of the sheer magnitude of the task of mastering firsthand all of the social, political, philosophical, and religious facets of the milieu from which a writing emerges, the exegete frequently accepts as working historical presuppositions the results of certain standard investigations into that milieu. Often, confidence in such results is quite justified, but such confidence must never be interpreted as license for the neglect of periodic re-examination of these presuppositions. And especially does such re-examination become mandatory when there are new discoveries of relevant data.

Our purpose in the ensuing study will be to examine afresh one of these presuppositions, viz. the traditional view of Gnostic eschatology, and to do so with special reference to writings from the Coptic Gnostic Library discovered near Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt in 1945/46 ²⁾. Our procedure will be as follows: First, we shall summarize the traditional view and its impact

¹⁾ See, for example, the discussion of this "canon" by WERNER GEORG KÜMMEL, "New Testament Exegesis", *Exegetical Method: A Student's Handbook*, trans. by E. V. N. GOETCHIUS (New York: The Seabury Press, 1967), pp. 35 ff.

²⁾ The most complete and recent inventories of the Library, as well as the most recent surveys of work in this literature, are those of MARTIN KRAUSE, "Der koptische Handschriftenfund bei Nag Hammadi. Umfang und Inhalt", *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts*, Abteilung Kairo, Band 18 (1962), pp. 121-132; KRAUSE's, "Der Stand der Veröffentlichung der Nag Hammadi Texte", *The Origins of Gnosticism / Le origini dello Gnosticismo*, ed. UGO BIANCHI (*Studies in the History of Religions*. Supplements to *Numen*, Vol. XII; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), pp. 60 ff.; and JAMES M. ROBINSON, "The Coptic Gnostic Library Today", *New Testament Studies*, Vol. 14 (1968), pp. 356-401, updated *NTSt*, Vol. 16 (1970), pp. 185-190.

upon the interpretation of certain New Testament passages. Second, we shall survey the Gnostic literature, both that formerly known and that recently added from Nag Hammadi, in order to see what views of eschatology are actually present in these texts. Third and finally, we shall consider what modifications—if any—are required in the presuppositions regarding Gnostic eschatology which have guided New Testament exegesis.

By way of introduction, however, we must undertake to define our terminology, for, as is well-known, the definition of Gnosticism has been among the thorniest of problems confronting the historian; and even "eschatology" has failed to gain a generally-accepted meaning among all students of religion. With respect to the former term, there is much to commend that set of definitions formulated by the International Colloquium on the Origins of Gnosticism held at the University of Messina in April of 1966¹). Members of that Colloquium agreed that for clarification there should be distinctions made between "Gnosis", "Gnosticism", "pre-Gnosticism", and "proto-Gnosticism". By the term "Gnosis", one has reference in a phenomenological manner to "knowledge of the divine mysteries reserved for the elite". Such a phenomenon may appear in any religious sphere at any time. "Gnosticism", by contrast, refers specifically to that unique form of religion developed in certain second century sects which was first identified and combatted by Heresiologists of that century. Integral to such "Gnosticism" is a cosmogony involving a split in or devolution of the Godhead, an event which results in Creation. Man, in turn, is dualistically conceived. He possesses a spark of the divine, now fallen and imprisoned in matter, which must be awakened to its true nature by the divine counterpart of the self and thereby re-integrated into the divine world²). "Pre-Gnosticism", then, is a term applied to those particular theologumena which emerge

¹) The complete collection of papers delivered at this Colloquium is now to be found in published form in UGO BIANCHI's edited volume mentioned in Note 2, p. 141. In what follows, the author is especially indebted to the skillful summation of the Messina Meeting provided by Father GEORGE MACRAE, S. J., "Biblical News: Gnosis in Messina", *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (July, 1966), pp. 322-333.

²) In the words of Prof. BIANCHI, convener of the Messina Colloquium: "... the type of Gnosis found in Gnosticism is specifically characterized by the identity of the 'knower', 'the known' (his own divine substance), and the 'means of knowing' (gnosis as an implicit facility to be awakened and actualized)." (As reported by MACRAE, *ibid.*, p. 332).

from Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Iranian, Jewish, and Christian spheres of influence, and which are found in their uniquely Gnostic combination only in the developed second century systems. Finally, "proto-Gnosticism" is a designation utilized by some scholars to describe fully-developed Gnostic systems which they believe have emerged prior to the second century. Thus, "pre-Christian" or first century systems should be termed "proto-Gnostic". These distinctions represent a constructive contribution to Gnostic studies, and we accordingly adopt them for the study which follows ¹).

By "eschatology", then, we mean religious or philosophical teachings about "last things". Such teachings may focus on the end of a person's life (individual eschatology), the termination of a nation's existence (nationalistic eschatology), or the destiny of the cosmos (universal eschatology). From the Judaeo-Christian frame of reference we may define eschatology simply as the doctrine of last things, such as death, resurrection, immortality, the end of the age, the Advent of the Messiah, and the future state.

I. *The Traditional View of Gnostic Eschatology and Its Impact on New Testament Interpretation*

The traditional view of Gnostic eschatology has been that the Gnostic "knower" by receiving the saving "gnosis" of who he is, whence he has come, and whither he returns has already obtained in his earthly life the essentials of his eschatological hope. He enjoys a kind of "instant eschatology", being already saved in the "Now". It is true that scholars have given some attention to the post-mortem ascent of the Gnostic soul or "spirit-self" and to the final destiny of the cosmos in Gnosticism ²); nevertheless, such

¹) The similarity of these definitions to those formulated and vigorously supported by R. McL. WILSON will be apparent to students of Gnosticism. For WILSON's views, see *The Gnostic Problem* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Company, Ltd., 1958), pp. 98 and 261; "Gnostic Origins", *Vigiliae Christianae*, 9 (1955), pp. 193-211; and now, *Gnosis and the New Testament: Gnosticism and Newly Discovered Gnostic Writings in Relation to the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), espec. pp. 17 f., 22-30.

²) See, for example, WILHELM BOUSSET, "Die Himmelfahrt der Seele", *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, 4 (1901), pp. 136-169; 229-273; HANS JONAS, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist: Teil 1 — Die mythologische Gnosis* (3. Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964), pp. 199-210; ROBERT McL. WILSON, *The Gnostic Problem*, Chapter VII, pp. 207-255; ROBERT HAARDT, "Das universaleschatologische Vorstellungsgut in der Gnosis", *Vom Messias zum Christos: Die Fülle der Zeit in religionsgeschichtlicher und theologischer*

matters have been viewed as peripheral to the Gnostic's experience of salvation in the present. ADOLF HARNACK's comment is representative:

"If it be allowed that not all Gnostics have been of the view that 'the resurrection has already occurred', even so for most of them futuristic expectations appear to have been quite faint and above all meaningless" ¹).

Such a view of Gnostic eschatology has contributed significantly to the formulation of theories seeking to explain the origins of Gnosticism out of a failure of the imminent futuristic eschatological hopes of both Christians and Jews. F. C. BURKITT, for example, held that the non-arrival of the Day of Judgment and thus the delay of the "Parousia" in Christian experience was "the prime factor in the rise of Gnostic systems" ²). Futuristic eschatology was replaced by the Gnostic's sense of having in the present the guarantee of eschatological rewards by virtue of his possession of an immortal "pneuma". ROBERT GRANT, on the other hand, has more recently advocated that Gnosticism emerged from the failure of Jewish apocalyptic hope. Salvation is found not in the distant or even imminent future but is realized in this life ³).

In accord with such views, it has become increasingly popular to speak of the Gnostic's lack of interest in history or his problem with time. The supernatural symbolism inherent in Gnostic language prevents it from ever being able to express adequately the concrete realities of Biblical eschatology. Eschatological language is "spiritualized", and any apocalyptic interest which may remain is "forever severed from history, society, or man" ⁴). In fact, in the view of HENRI-CHARLES PUECH, history and time represent spheres of

Sicht, herausgegeben von KURT SCHUBERT (Wien: Herder & Co., 1964), pp. 315-336; JAN ZANDEE, "Gnostische Eschatologie", *X. Internationaler Kongress für Religionsgeschichte, 11.-17. September, 1960 in Marburg/Lahn*, herausgegeben vom Organisationsausschuss, Kommissionsverlag (Marburg: N. G. Elwert Verlag, 1961), pp. 94-95; and ZANDEE, "Gnostic Ideas on the Fall and Salvation", *Numen*, Vol. XI, Fasc. 1 (January, 1964), pp. 13-74.

¹) ADOLF VON HARNACK, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* (4. neu durchgearbeitete und vermehrte Auflage von 1909; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1930), p. 289, n. 1. English translation is made by the author.

²) F. C. BURKITT, *Church and Gnosis* (Cambridge: University Press, 1932), pp. 10 and 125.

³) ROBERT M. GRANT, *Gnosticism and Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), pp. 29-38.

⁴) The quoted material is from SAMUEL LAEUCHLI, *The Language of Faith* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), pp. 81-82.

imprisonment for the Gnostic, and his ultimate desire is to negate or depart from them. In contrast, therefore, to the Greek conception of time as cyclical and to the Christian conception of time as linear, Gnosticism:

"With its need for immediate salvation... rejects the servitude and repetition of Greek cyclical time as well as the organic continuity of Christian unilinear time; it shatters them both into bits" ¹).

Consequently, eschatological salvation in Gnosticism has come to be viewed as actually "atemporal".

Considerable sharpening of this conception of Gnostic realized eschatology has come through the application of MARTIN HEIDEGGER's existentialist categories of interpretation to the Gnostic texts by HANS JONAS and RUDOLF BULTMANN. JONAS, for example, states that for the Gnostic, salvation means essentially the present attainment, the "realization" (*Verwirklichung*), of that knowledge which assures one of his essential divinity. In contrast to the Christian response of "hearing and believing" God's call, the Gnostic instead "sees" and "possesses already" what he needs for personal salvation in his "pneumatic essence" ²). BULTMANN tends to stress an "individualistic type of mysticism" as the highest expression of Gnosticism. In such "mysticism, the redemption, the ascent of the Self, is anticipated in meditation and ecstasy" ³).

Now it is this traditional understanding of Gnostic eschatology, especially in its existentially-interpreted form, which has been a significant historical presupposition of a number of New Testament exegetes who have held the "proto-Gnostic" view. According to them, definite "proto-Gnostic" ideas and conceptions were utilized by certain New Testament writers, with such ideas occasionally exerting considerable theological influence. Only in the later New Testament writings, such as the Pastorals, do we find "proto-

¹) HENRI-CHARLES PUECH, "Gnosis and Time", *Man and Time: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, trans. RALPH MANHEIM (Bollingen Series XX. 3; New York: Pantheon Books, Inc., 1957), p. 40, cf. p. 63. PUECH's representation of the "Christian view of time" rests on OSCAR CULLMANN's conclusions in the latter's *Christ and Time*.

²) JONAS, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, II, 1, pp. 138-143.

³) So RUDOLF BULTMANN in *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting*, trans. R. H. FULLER (New York: Meridian Books, 1959), p. 171; and in his *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. KENDRICK GROBEL (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), Vol. I, p. 165.

Gnosticism" regarded as false teaching and actively combatted ¹). And it appears that one important criterion utilized by such exegetes to detect "proto-Gnostic" influences or to identify "proto-Gnostic" opponents in early New Testament writings has been that whenever there appears a one-sided emphasis on realized eschatology, one may justifiably be suspicious of "proto-Gnostic" influence.

The earliest New Testament writings in which traces of the "proto-Gnostic" view of realized eschatology have been detected are, of course, the Pauline letters ²). As part of his wide-ranging theory that the nature of the heretical opposition encountered by the Apostle in his Mission to the Gentiles was of a Jewish-Christian Gnostic variety, WALTER SCHMITHALS has sought to demonstrate the presence of "proto-Gnostic" eschatological thought at Thessalonica, at Philippi, and in Galatia. In 1 Thess. iv 13 ff., for example, Paul's reassurances regarding the future resurrection of those faithful who have died before Christ's Parousia are interpreted by SCHMITHALS as an implicit corrective of those "gnosticized" members of the community who deny a future resurrection of the body altogether. Such an erroneous view could only emerge from the conviction that the "pneuma-self" of the Gnostic has already experienced a resurrection through its reception of the saving "gnosis" ³). Likewise, at Philippi the Apostle is said to be combating certain Christian-Gnostic "enthusiasts" (iii 10-16) who are making the claim that they are "already perfect" and thus have "already attained" ethical and eschatological goals ⁴). And, the same type of thought is encountered among Paul's Jewish-Christian Gnostic opponents in Galatia who by their libertine behavior (v 1, 13) and boasts of possessing "the spirit" (iii 2, v 25 f., and vi 1) give clear evidence of their self-assurance of being saved in the present ⁵).

¹) We owe this outline of the interaction between "proto-Gnosticism" and New Testament Christianity to ERNST HAENCHEN's article, "Gnosis und das NT", *RGG*³, II (1958), cols. 1652 f.

²) We are not attempting an exhaustive catalogue of all scholars' views here. Rather, the following is merely given as a sampling of those considered most representative.

³) So WALTER SCHMITHALS, *Paulus und die Gnostiker: Untersuchungen zu den kleinen Paulusbriefen* (*Theologische Forschung. Wissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Kirchlich-Evangelischen Lehre*; XXXV; Hamburg-Bergstedt: Herbert Reich-Evangelischer Verlag, 1965), pp. 117-119.

⁴) *Ibid.*, pp. 67-69.

⁵) *Ibid.*, pp. 34 f.

A substantial number of interpreters would also agree that the Apostle encountered a "proto-Gnostic" faction at Corinth and that their views on the resurrection were at the center of his polemic ¹). According to BULTMANN and others, the Apostle at first misunderstands the Gnostic position, thinking that they are actually completely sceptical about any form of life after death (cf. 1 Cor. xv 12, 19, and 32). Later, however, he corrects his error and pens his polemic against their real view in 2 Cor. v 1-10. His opponents, it seems, are stressing their perfectionism in the present and are rejecting the realistic and futuristic aspects of eschatology (cf., as well, 1 Cor. xv 20-32 and 2 Cor. iii 18) ²). According to these Gnostics, the idea of bodily resurrection—even for Christ (so SCHMITHALS) ³)—is repugnant since in their view the body is put aside at death and only the "pneuma-self" ascends to heaven. To combat this view the Apostle does four things: (1) He emphasizes the "not yet" of Christian eschatology (2 Cor. iii 12); (2) he develops the teaching of the *σῶμα πνευματικόν* as the form of the resurrected state (1 Cor. xv 35-54); (3) he stresses that the *πνεῦμα* is actually attested by love (1 Cor. xiii); and (4) he witnesses to his opponents the bearing of bodily sufferings (2 Cor. iv 7-18) ⁴).

Beyond the Pauline literature, a major "eschatological shift" into the "Now", which is attributed to a "decisive impulse from pre-Christian Gnosticism", has been identified in the Fourth Gospel ⁵). Here the Jewish-futuristic eschatological expectation

¹) The relevant literature is exhaustively reviewed by JACK H. WILSON, "The Corinthians Who Say There Is No Resurrection of the Dead", *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche*, 59. Band, Heft 1/2 (1968), pp. 90-107.

²) RUDOLF BULTMANN, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (5. Auflage; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1965), p. 172. In fundamental agreement with this interpretation are WALTER SCHMITHALS, *Die Gnosis in Korinth: Eine Untersuchung zu den Korintherbriefen* (2. Auflage: *Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments*, N.F. 66, Heft 48; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), p. 147; ERICH DINKLER, "Korintherbriefe", *RGG*³ IV (1960), cols. 18-20; and ERNST HAENCHEN, *RGG*³ II (1958), col. 1653. WILSON, *Gnosis and the New Testament*, pp. 36, 51, and 53, disagrees, believing the Corinthian opponents to be Greeks who believed only in the immortality of the soul.

³) SCHMITHALS, *Die Gnosis*, p. 149 f.

⁴) So HAENCHEN, *RGG*³ II (1958), col. 1653.

⁵) So ERICH DINKLER in his article, "Earliest Christianity", *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East*, ed. ROBERT C. DENTAN (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), pp. 203, 207 ff.

and the characteristic "eschatological reservation" (ERNST KÄSEMANN's term for the imminent Parousia-expectation of the Primitive Church ¹⁾) fall away. They are replaced by the present realization of the Resurrection experience and of Judgment (see Jesus' words in v 24, 25, iii 18 f., xi 25 f., and xii 31). Such futuristic references to the resurrection as do remain (e.g. v 28 f., vi 30, 40, 44, 54, xii 48) are not considered part of the original text but are attributed to the hand of an Ecclesiastical Redactor who re-worked the whole in an effort to bring it more into line with the "traditional eschatology" of Primitive Christianity ²⁾). In the opinion of ERNST KÄSEMANN, then, the eschatology of the Fourth Gospel is a modified form of the error propagated by the false teachers of 2 Tim. ii 18 who state that the resurrection has already occurred. Consequently, this Gospel adds further testimony to the fact that "... all Gnosis (testifies to) the present nature of salvation, and, in so doing, diverges from apocalyptic" ³⁾). BULTMANN entertains a similar view of the eschatology of 1 John, where he also finds the corrective hand of an orthodox Ecclesiastical Redactor introducing traditional eschatological views into an original Gnostic source ⁴⁾).

Finally, several passages in the Deutero-Paulines, in Hebrews, and in 2 Peter have been interpreted as revealing the influence of or polemic against Gnostic eschatological views. Again, 2 Tim. ii 18, which reports the heretical view of Hymenaeus and Philetus that the "resurrection has already occurred," is taken to be the key which unlocks the meaning of most of these passages. Behind this statement lies the same belief which appears among Paul's opponents in Corinth, viz. that in baptism they have already attained the goal of salvation and that as a consequence Christian existence

¹⁾ See, for example, his use of the term in the article, "Zum Thema der urchristlichen Apokalyptik", *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (Zweite Auflage, Zweiter Band; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), p. 130.

²⁾ The theory that an Ecclesiastical Redactor corrected the "dangerous Gnostic eschatology" of the Gospel is, of course, that of RUDOLF BULTMANN. It is expressed in his article, "Johannesevangelium", *RGG*³, III (1959), cols. 841, 846-7; in his *Theology*, I, pp. 168 f., 178; and, in his *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (*Meyer Kommentar*; 16. Auflage; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), pp. 196-7, 161-2, 177.

³⁾ ERNST KÄSEMANN, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W. J. MONTAGUE (London: SCM Press, 1964), pp. 171-2. Cf., also, KÄSEMANN's comments in *Jesu Letzter Wille nach Johannes 17* (2., unveränderte Auflage; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1967), pp. 32-34.

⁴⁾ „Die kirchliche Redaktion des I. Johannes", *In Memoriam Ernst Lohmeyer* (1951), pp. 181 ff.

on earth represents the possession of a heavenly nature in the temporal sphere. According to KÄSEMANN, this Gnostic understanding of existence prevails in modified form in the hymnic and confessional fragments found in Eph. ii 5 f., v 14 (cf. BULTMANN's similar view of this passage¹); Col. ii 12 f. and iii 3-4. From these passages, KÄSEMANN believes, it is clear that:

"As participants in the Cross of Christ, the baptized ones are simultaneously participants in the Resurrection and Enthronement of Christ. They have been freed from the old Aeon of death and the Powers and have been transposed into the new Aeon of the Kingdom of Christ"²).

In a similar vein, BULTMANN contends that the "Enthronement Idea," which is gnostically conceived as having reference to the Ascent to the heavenly Aeon of the Redeemer and his "Body" of Pneumatics, has been overlaid with Jewish-Christian futuristic eschatology in Heb. i 6 and ii 8³). In addition, BORNKAMM has detected the influence of Gnostic thought in the "eschatological shift" found in Col. i 5, 23, and 27, where "hope" (ἐλπίς) is no longer understood in the Jewish-Christian sense of "historical eschatology" but is thought to be a present possession⁴). And, 2 Peter, as well, has been viewed as an apology directed against Gnostics who are spiritualizing the Parousia (see, especially, 2 Pet. iii 3 ff. and ii 19) ⁵).

II. *Evidence from the Gnostic Texts: The Traditional View of Gnostic Eschatology*

In the preceding, we have attempted both to summarize the traditional view of Gnostic eschatology and to survey briefly the results of presupposing this view in New Testament exegesis. But now it is important for us to test these presuppositions against the firsthand testimony of the Gnostic writings themselves. Space limitations militate against the full citation of all relevant texts, but from the available material some good representative selections may be presented.

¹) *Theology*, I, p. 169.

²) *Exegetische Versuche* (1965), II, p. 120. Cf., also, KÄSEMANN's *Jesu letzter Wille*, p. 32 f. English translation from the German was made by the author.

³) *Theology*, I, p. 176.

⁴) GÜNTHER BORNKAMM, *Das Ende des Gesetzes: Paulusstudien* (2. Auflage; *Beiträge zur evangelische Theologie*, 16; München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1958), pp. 139 ff.

⁵) So KÄSEMANN, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, pp. 170 ff., 185.

A. "Realized Eschatology"

In a number of texts, we find the traditional view of Gnostic eschatology clearly expressed. There are at least four facets of that eschatological outlook which merit illustration:

First, it is evident that several Gnostic writers did find a close connection between the reception of baptism and the present realization of final hopes. In Irenaeus' description of the Simonian Menander, for example, we read:

"His disciples are able to receive resurrection through their baptism into Him; they can no longer die but remain ageless and immortal." (*Adv. Haer.* I 23.5) ¹⁾

Similarly, in the Apocryphon of John from Codex II the Redeemer is described as entering the "prison of the body" of the Elect, "calling" the soul to wakefulness, and giving "gnosis" to the soul of its consubstantiality with the Divine. The consummation of this process of salvation is expressed in a type of baptismal formula by the Redeemer:

"And I raised him (i.e. the elect one), and I sealed him with the light of the water with five seals that death should not get power over him from that time." (31, 22-25) ²⁾

Moreover, we catch something of the ecstatic exuberance of the one who experiences salvation in the "Now" in the words of the Marcosian Baptismal Formula preserved to us by Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* I. 21, 3-4):

"In thy name, Father! Be baptized in the Light in which the Spirit of Truth emanated for your redemption! May you live!"

And to this Formula, presumably pronounced by a priestly functionary, the baptized one responds:

"I have been anointed and I have been redeemed, and my soul has been redeemed from every Aeon, in the name of Iao, who redeemed his soul in the living Christ. . . . ³⁾"

¹⁾ The translation of this passage is drawn from ROBERT M. GRANT, ed., *Gnosticism: A Sourcebook of Heretical Writings from the Early Christian Period* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), p. 30.

²⁾ The Text of 31, 22-25 is cited from SØREN GIVERSEN, *Apocryphon Johannis: The Coptic Text of the Apocryphon Johannis in the Nag Hammadi Codex II with Translation, Introduction and Commentary* (*Acta Theologica Danica*, Vol. V; Copenhagen: Prostant Apud Munksgaard, 1963), p. 107.

³⁾ Translation is from GRANT, *Gnosticism*, p. 193.

In the *Hermetica*, too, we find the idea of a monistic unification of believers with the Divine Monad through their baptism in the great Crater (Tractate IV, 4) ¹⁾. "Rebirth", a term which may be used of baptism, also occurs in the Naassene Exegesis (Hippolytus, *Ref.* V. 8, 36), and it is clearly related to the sense of presently possessing immortality. Finally, several interpreters—erroneously we believe ²⁾—have expressed the view that baptismal practise is the *Sitz im Leben* of a "mystical affirmation" of realized eschatology in the Treatise on the Resurrection from Codex I of the Nag Hammadi Library:

"Then, indeed, as the Apostle said, 'We suffered with him, and we arose with him, and we went to heaven with him.' " (45, 24-28) ³⁾

A second facet of that realized eschatology found in some texts is that it is through his reception of the "saving knowledge" that the "knower" comes to full realization of his divine nature in the present. For example, in the Gospel of Truth from CG I (22, 2-12) we have:

"Hence, if one has knowledge, he is from above. If he is called, he hears, he replies, and he turns toward him who called him and he ascends to him and knows what he is called. Since he has knowledge, he does the will of him who called him. He desires to please him and finds rest ⁴⁾".

(Cf., also, GTr 22, 13-19; 31, 13-21; and 42, 11-37). "Knowledge" of one's origin from Life and Light gives a certainty to his firm possession of immortality, according to Tractate I, 21 of the *Hermetica*. Similarly, in the Apocryphon of James (CG I, 1) the Elect are reminded:

¹⁾ Citations of the *Hermetica* correspond to sections found in the edition and translation of A.D. Nock and A.-J. Festugière, *Hermès Trismégiste: Corpus Hermeticum* (Tomes I-IV; Paris: Société d'Édition „Les Belles Lettres", 1954-1960).

²⁾ The disputed interpretation is found in MICHEL MALININE, HENRI-CHARLES PUECH, GILLES QUISPÉL, WALTER C. TILL, ROBERT McL. WILSON, and JAN ZANDEE, *De Resurrectione (Epistula ad Rheginum)* (Zürich: Rascher Verlag, 1963), pp. XIII and XXXI. Contrast with this, MALCOLM L. PEEL, *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection (The New Testament Library)*; London and Philadelphia: SCM and Westminster Presses, 1969), pp. 133-9, 141n.

³⁾ Translation is from *De Resurrectione*, p. 62.

⁴⁾ Translation is from GRANT, *Gnosticism*, p. 150. Cf. the same passage in MICHEL MALININE, HENRI-CHARLES PUECH, and GILLES QUISPÉL, *Evangelium Veritatis* (Zürich: Rascher Verlag, 1956), p. 94.

"But you, by faith (and) knowledge have received for yourselves life... Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall receive Life for himself and will believe in the Kingdom, will never depart from it..." (14, 8-17; cf. 3, 24-34) ¹).

And, in Authoritative Teaching (CG VI, 3) the reception of divine "gnosis" is described in terms of the experience of the soul. She comes, it is said, to "know her depth", stripping off her worldly garment (of ignorance), despising life, and in effect—receiving salvation now (31, 31-32, 23). The content of this "gnosis" is described in The Apocalypse of Peter (CG VII, 3) as recognition of the Gnostic's "consubstantiality with the Divine" (70, 15-71, 14). Such "gnosis" is not to be held statically, but—according to the Teaching of Silvanus (CG VII, 4: 91, 33-92, 29)—it is necessary to "guard the divine" which is within, to cultivate it, and thereby come to know what is one's birth and substance, and from what race he comes ²).

Third, there is found in texts giving evidence of the traditional view of Gnostic eschatology the conviction that the spiritual man, properly illuminated with "gnosis", has already been transferred to the realm of Light. This conviction finds expression in the Treatise on the Resurrection (CG I, 3) in such phrases as that one cited earlier, viz. "...and we went to heaven with him" (45, 27-28; cf. 49, 9-24). In a like manner, we find a description of the mystical experience of the soul during its ascension to the realm of the Divine and its progressive apotheosization within the life-experience of Tat in Tractate XIII, 8-10 of the Hermetica (cf., also, XIII, 3). An instance of this experience occurs in The Dialogue of the Saviour

¹) The full translation and edited text of this letter have now been published in MICHEL MALININE, HENRI-CHARLES PUECH, GILLES QUISPÉL, WALTER TILL, RODOLPHE KASSER, R. McL. WILSON, and JAN ZANDEE, *Epistula Iacobi Apocrypha* (Zürich: Rascher Verlag, 1968). For the passage cited here, see p. 128.

The abbreviation "CG" which we have used to identify this text is borrowed from WALTER TILL (*Die gnostischen Schriften des koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis 8502*; TU, 60; 1955) and indicates (Papyrus) Cairensis Gnosticus, or the codices composing the Nag Hammadi Library. The abbreviation CG is followed by a capital Roman numeral indicating the codex, and a small, italicized Arabic numeral indicating the writing which is being cited within that codex.

²) On the theme of realizing eschatological goals in the present through reception of "gnosis", see also the views of the Sethian Ophites in *Iren.*, *Adv. Haer.* I 30; the Valentinian System of Ptolemaeus in *Adv. Haer.* I 6. 2; in the Apocalypse of James, CG V, 4: 55, 3 and 62, 16-22; and the Gospel of Thomas, Logion 1.

(CG III, 5: 142, 16-24) where the Lord, in reply to his disciples' question as to where they will go after departing this earth, states that they are already standing in that place! The disciple who recognizes this is already perfect. And, the experience of the soul, as related in Authoritative Teaching (CG VI, 3:35, 2-18) indicates its "rising to" and "rest in the Bridal Chamber" while still being in the body of flesh.

A fourth and final emphasis found in texts which display the traditional view is that the Eschaton, the Day of eschatological fulfillment, is felt to have arrived in the present for the Gnostic. This eschatological "shift" is clearly discernible in Logion 51 of the Gospel of Thomas:

"His disciples said to him: 'On what day will rest for the dead occur, and on what day does the new world come?' He said to them, 'That (Rest) for which you are waiting has come, but you do not recognize it'"¹).

Similarly, in the Gospel of Truth we find the receiver of "gnosis" encouraged to do the following:

"Say, then, in your heart that you are (in) this perfect day and that in you the light which does not fail dwells" (32, 31-36)²).

And, in the Dialogue of the Saviour (CG III, 5), the Saviour says to his disciples:

"Already the time has come, O brothers, that we should leave behind us our sufferings and stand in the Rest; for he who stands in the Rest will rest himself forever. But I say to you, be in heaven at every time..." (120, 1-9)

B. Ascent of the "Pneuma-Self"

It is also part of the traditional view of Gnostic eschatology that death marks the point of departure of the "pneuma-self" from the body. And, this is precisely what is found in numerous texts. One account of Basilides' teaching (*Adv. Haer.* I 24. 5) makes it explicit:

"There is salvation for the soul alone, since the body is by nature perishable"³).

¹) Translation is from A. GUILLAUMONT, H.-Ch. PUECH, G. QUISPÉL, W. TILL, and YASSAH 'ABD AL MASIḤ, *The Gospel according to Thomas: Coptic Text Established and Translated* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1959), p. 29.

²) GRANT, *Gnosticism*, p. 155; PUECH, QUISPÉL, et al., *Evangelium Veritatis*, p. 104.

³) Translation is from GRANT, *Gnosticism*, p. 34.

While encased in the body, the soul is held to be captive in the "grave of the new creation of the body" (Apocryphon of John—CG II, 1: 21, 10) or a "tomb" (24, 34)¹). In such a state, according to a treatise titled "Authoritative Teaching" (CG VI, 3: 27, 25-28), the soul "... languishes because she exists in a house of poverty (i.e., the body)." Thus, it is necessary, as several passages in the Hermetica make clear (I, 22. 24-26; VII, 2-3; XII, 7), for the soul to abandon the body. In the same vein, the apocryphal Letter from Peter to Philip (CG VII, 2: 137, 6-9) holds that in stripping off the corrupted body one becomes an illuminator among dead men. The resulting "de-carnated" form of the soul is described in the Dialogue of the Saviour (CG III, 5: 143, 10-23) as being "in nakedness":

"But I say to you that you will be blessed when you shall be naked, for this (i.e., the possession of a fleshly garment) is not a great thing."

Other passages, far too numerous to allude to here, support this conception of an ascent of the nude soul or spirit-self after death²).

Such a view, of course, differs radically from the Judaeo-Christian belief in "resurrection of the body," as such belief finds expression in passages like Daniel xii 2-4; Isa. xxvi 19; I Cor. xv; I Thess. iv; etc. Simon Magus' conviction, as reported in the Clementine Homilies (2: 2), is representative of the view of many Gnostics: "he does not believe the dead will be raised." Only the "pneuma-self" shall rise free³).

¹) For the larger contexts of these passages, see MARTIN KRAUSE and PAHOR LABIB, *Die Drei Versionen des Apokryphon des Johannes im Koptischen Museum zu Alt-Kairo (Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Band I: Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1962), pp. 166 and 178.*

²) Cf., for example, the Apocryphon of John (CG II, 1: 9, 14-34); Epiphanius, *Par.* II. 26. 9, 3; 26. 10, 7-10; 38. 3, 1-2; Irenaeus' account of Marcion's teaching (*Adv. Haer.* I 27. 3); the Gospel of Mary (GRANT, *Gnosticism*, p. 167); Celsus' description of an Ophite Diagram (Origen, *Contra Cel.*, vi. 24-38); the account of Baruch by Justin (GRANT, *Gnosticism*, p. 99); Ezri's Resumé of Marcionite Doctrine (GRANT, *Gnosticism*, p. 102); Irenaeus' account of Marcosian worship (*Adv. Haer.* I 21. 4-5); the Apocryphon of James (CG I, 1: 13, 12-13. 19-20); the Dialogue of the Saviour (CG III, 5: 132, 11-12 and 134, 11-13); the Apocalypse of Paul (CG V, 2: 20, 7-15. 21-22. 28-29); the First Apocalypse of James (CG V, 3: 33, 1-25); the Second Apocalypse of James (CG V, 4: 46, 14-19; 56, 9-14; 57, 6-8); elsewhere in Authoritative Teaching (CG VI, 3: 22, 2-17. 33; 23, 12-14); the Second Treatise of the Great Seth (CG VII, 2: 57, 27-58, 4); and the apocryphal Letter of Peter to Philip (CG VIII, 2: 137, 6-9).

³) Cf. the similar views found in Baruch by Justin (GRANT, *Gnosticism*,

The end goal of such an ascent seems to have been the re-absorption of the Light-self into its original Origin of Light, or into the Godhead. As Saturninus is supposed to have taught:

"After death this spark of light returns to what is of the same nature as itself, and the other elements of man's composition are dissolved into what they were made from" (*Adv. Haer.* I 24, 1)¹.

The same idea of return to an original state of perfection is reflected in the Second Apocalypse of James (CG V, 4: 59, 9-14)². On the other hand, a few Gnostics apparently believed in the transmigration of imperfect souls (cf. the views of the Carpocratians—*Adv. Haer.* I 25, 4; and the Apocalypse of Paul—CG V, 2: 20, 22-23; 21, 17-20)³. And Celsus reports that the Ophites held the view that for the unrighteous there must be a process of reincarnation (*Adv. Haer.* I 6, 24-38). But the dominant view is that of the ascent of the bare "pneuma" and its ultimate re-absorption into the Divine.

III. Evidence from the Gnostic Texts: Some New Views of Gnostic Eschatology

It is abundantly clear from the foregoing that many texts do support the exegetical presupposition that in Gnostic experience eschatological goals are conceived of as being realized in the present. At the same time, however, further texts make it evident that certain aspects of Gnostic eschatological hope remain outstanding and futuristic in orientation. And, *mirabile dictu*, it can even be shown that some Gnostics did believe in a form of resurrection! To demonstrate this, we turn first to a consideration of "Endzeit" speculation in the Gnostic literature.

A. "Endzeit" Speculation

In material surveyed thus far, it should be noted that attention has been focussed on the eschatology of the individual. Indeed,

p. 99); Epiphanius' report in *Par.* II. 26. 9, 3; The Second Apocalypse of James, CG V, 4: 57, 6-8; and the Letter of Peter to Philip, CG VIII, 2: 137, 6-9.

¹) Translation is from GRANT, *Gnosticism*, p. 31.

²) For the Coptic text and translation of this Apocalypse, see ALEXANDER BÖHLIG und PAHOR LABIB, *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen aus Codex V von Nag Hammadi im Koptischen Museum zu Alt-Kairo* (Halle-Wittenberg: Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther-Universität, Sonderband, 1963), pp. 56-85.

³) The texts from the Apocalypse of Paul are found in *ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

it is in the sphere of individual eschatology that the distinctive Gnostic emphasis on the present is mostly found. However, in a majority of Gnostic systems the destiny of the individual is inextricably bound up with the fate of the cosmos. This is to say that while the salvation of the individual "pneuma-self" is of great importance, the end-goal of the salvation process is the reconstruction of the originally perfect source of Light, of the complete Godhead itself. That this is the case may now be demonstrated:

Two views are especially characteristic in their descriptions of the End-expectation: the Sethian-Ophites (*Adv. Haer.* I 30) picture the ascended Redeemer, Christ, as seated in heaven, "receiving" ¹⁾ the souls of those who have put off the body. By this means, He gets back the "moist nature of the Light":

"The end will come," in their view, "when the whole moist nature of the spirit of Light is collected and withdrawn into the Aeon of Imperishability" ²⁾.

In the Gospel of Truth, in turn, we read:

"This is the word of the Gospel of the finding of the Pleroma for those who wait for the salvation which comes from above. When their hope, for which they are waiting, is waiting—they whose likeness is the light in which there is no shadow, then at that time the Pleroma is about to come" (34, 34-35, 7) ³⁾.

The text goes on to describe the end:

"For the Father knows the beginning of them all as well as their end. For when their end arrives, he will question them to their faces. The end, you see, is the recognition of him who is hidden, that is, the Father, from whom the beginning came forth (and) to whom will return all who have come from him" (37, 34-38, 4).

A perusal of other Gnostic texts reveals a variety of images used to describe the "End time": it is called the "Reception" into "imperishable life" of all souls upon whom the Spirit of Life has

¹⁾ A "Receiver" is also mentioned in the Apocryphon of John (CG II, 1: 25, 16-26, 19), a "Receiver" who accepts souls upon whom the Spirit of Life descends—giving them imperishable life. Cf., also, the Egyptian Gospel (CG III, 2: 61, 22-23), the text and translation of which have now been published by JEAN DORESSE, "Le Livre Sacré du Grand Esprit Invisible' ou 'L'Évangile des Égyptiens': Texte Copte Édité, Traduit et Commenté d'après le Codex I de Nag'a-Hammadi/Khénoboskion", *Journal Asiatique*, CCLIV (1966), pp. 396-399 (actually appeared in early 1968).

²⁾ Translation is from GRANT, *Gnosticism*, p. 59.

³⁾ MALININE, et al., *Evangelium Veritatis (Supplementum)*, 1961), pp. 31 ff.

descended (Apocry Jn: CG II, 1: 25, 16-26, 19); the "Rest of the Aeons" (Apocry Jn: CG II, 1: 26, 20-31); the "completion of the Pleroma" (Naassene Exegesis: Hipp., *Ref.* V. 8. 9-9. 6; and Pistis Sophia 48, 33-49, 1)¹); the "restoration" (Basilides' system: Hipp., *Ref.* VII. 26. 2 and 27. 4; Manichaeism, according to Epiph., *Pan.* 66, 31-37; the Treatise on the Resurrection, CG I, 3: 40, 30-33; Apocalypse of Peter, CG VIII, 3: 73, 29-74, 9); the "Return" of the men of the "Sonship" (Basilides' System: Hipp., *Ref.* VII. 26. 10); "the Great Mass" or "the hour of Restoration" (Basilides: Hipp., *Ref.* VII. 27. 5); the "shaping and perfecting in knowledge" of all that is spiritual (Valentinian System of Ptolemaeus: *Adv. Haer.* I 6, 1); the entry of the spiritual "syzygoi" into the Heavenly "Bridal Chamber" (Valentinian System of Ptolemaeus: *Adv. Haer.* I 7. 1); the "Harvest" or ingathering of the souls of Light (Heracleon's Exegesis of John: Origen, *Comm. on John*, Frag. 32)²); the "consummation of the Aeon" or "the end of days" ("On the Origin of the World": CG II, 5: 110, 13; 111, 4-5; 114, 24; 121, 26-27; 122, 32-33; 123, 19. 30-31; 125, 32-33)³); Gospel of the Egyptians—CG III, 2: 61, 1-25)⁴); Paraphrase of Shem—CG VII, 1: 48, 18-22); the "time of dissolution" (Dialogue of the Saviour: CG III, 5: 122, 2-3); the "hour" (Dialogue of the Saviour: 127, 16-19); "end of the All" (Dialogue of the Saviour: 142, 9-10); "day of death" (Apocalypse of Adam: CG V, 5: 76, 16-20)⁵); "rest in the Consummation" (Paraphrase of Shem: CG VII, 1: 43, 2-20); "great assembly of the faithful and believing entities"

¹) References to the Pistis Sophia are based upon the page and line enumeration offered by CARL SCHMIDT, *Koptisch-Gnostische Schriften: Erster Band—Die Pistis Sophia, Die beiden Bücher des Jeu, Unbekanntes altgnostisches Werk*, bearbeitet von WALTER C. TILL (3. Auflage; *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte, Koptisch*; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962), pp. 1-254.

²) References to Heracleon correspond to the enumeration of A. E. BROOKE, *The Fragments of Heracleon. Newly Edited from the MSS with an Introduction and Notes* (Vol. I; *Texts and Studies*, ed. by J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON; Cambridge: University Press, 1891).

³) References to the "Origin of the World" correspond to the Coptic page numbers, established by subtracting 48 from the plate numbers used in ALEXANDER BÖHLIG und PAHOR LABIB, *Die Koptisch-Gnostische Schrift Ohne Titel aus Codex II von Nag Hammadi im Koptischen Museum zu Alt-Kairo* (NR. 58, *Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Institut für Orientforschung*; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962).

⁴) See DORESSE, *Journal Asiatique*, CCLIV (1966), pp. 396-399.

⁵) The text and translation of the Apocalypse of Adam are found in BÖHLIG und LABIB, *Koptisch-gnostische Apokalypsen aus Codex V*, pp. 86-117.

(Second Treatise of the Great Seth: CG VII, 2: 51, 13-20); and "dissolution" of the corruptible (Apocalypse of Peter: CG VIII, 3: 76, 14-20; 77, 4-21).

Further, although the radical dualism existent between cosmos (Matter) and God (Divine Light) in Gnostic thought excludes any idea of cosmic renewal, such as the "new Heaven and Earth" of Jewish and Christian eschatology, it is nonetheless true that several Gnostic systems make use of Jewish-Christian apocalyptic imagery in describing the "Endzeit". Generally speaking, the apocalyptic events are not fully described, but we do find among the images used the following: the destruction of the world (Simon Magus: *Adv. Haer.* I 23, 2); a final world conflagration in Fire (Valentinian system of Ptolemaeus: *Adv. Haer.* I 7. 1; the *Excerpta ex Theodoto* in Clem. of Alex. 48, 4¹); the Pistis Sophia 48, 33-49, 4; the "Megale Apophasis" in Hipp., *Ref.* VI, 9, 10); great Thunder and a final Cosmic War (OnOrgWld: CG II, 5: 125, 32-34; 126, 4-15; 126, 20-127, 4); darkening of the sun and moon and the out-pouring of the eschatological "wrath" of Pistis Sophia (OnOrgWld: CG II, 5: 126, 10-11. 14-22); the war of evil powers against the Kingdom of Light (cf. Severus of Antioch, 123; Manichaean Homilies); the destruction of opposing gods (Manichaeism)²; OnOrgWld: CG II, 5: 126, 23-36); a "final Judgment" which both makes manifest the sparks of Light and implicitly, as well as explicitly, represents the condemnation of the powers of darkness and imperfect souls (Ptolemaeus' Valentinian System: *Adv. Haer.* I 13, 6; Pistis Sophia 248, 32-36; 251, 10-13; Mandaean Ginza³); Manichaean Homilies 35-38; the Dialogue of the Saviour: CG III, 5: 127, 16-19; Simon Magus in Clem. Hom. 11, 22; Apocryphon of John: CG II, 1: 27, 22-31; Gospel of Truth: CG I, 2: 37, 34-38, 6); Gospel of Egyptians CG III, 2: 61, 1-25; Apocalypse of Adam: CG V, 5: 75, 9-76, 20; Apocalypse of Peter: CG VII, 3: 73, 20-74, 9; 80, 27-29; and the Teaching of Silvanus: CG VII, 4: 102, 19-22); the final purification of the Community and speculations (mathematically conceived) about

¹) References to Theodotus are based upon F. SAGNARD, *Clément d'Alexandrie: Extraits de Théodote (Sources Chrétiennes: Série Annexe de Textes Hétérodoxes)*; Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1948).

²) See H.-CH. PUECH, *Le Manichéisme, son fondateur, sa doctrine* (*Publications du Musée Guimet*, 66; Paris, 1949), p. 80.

³) See MARK LIDZBARSKI, *Ginza. Der Schatz oder das Grosse Buch der Mandäer* (Göttingen, 1925), pp. 255, 311, 352, and 446.

the End of time (Manichaeism: Homily 32 f.; Apocalypse of Peter: CG VII, 3: 80, 27-29); a number of other great cosmic distresses, including the "Great War" (Manichaean Homilies, 7-42; cf. the Paraphrase of Shem: CG VII, 1: 29, 7-14; 31, 11-22; 43, 21-44, 25); the separation of the sexes of the demons to prevent further propagation of their kind (Manichaean Kephalaia 105, 31-33); the final "dissolution" of evil Matter (OnOrg Wld: CG II, 5: 103, 21-28; the Apocalypse of Peter: CG VII, 3: 76, 14-20; 77, 4-21; and the Dialogue of the Saviour: CG III, 5: 122, 1-3); the making manifest of that which was hidden (primarily the Light) (OnOrgWld: CG II, 5: 123, 28-31; 124, 25-30; and the Treatise on the Resurrection: CG I, 3: 48, 34-35); and, finally, the Parousia of the True Man (OnOrg Wld: CG II, 5: 123, 23-24; and the Apocalypse of Peter: CG VII, 3: 78, 3-6).

The foregoing evidence makes us agree with the stress which ROBERT HAARDT places on the importance of the end-goal of the soteriological process in Gnosticism, i.e. the return home of the fallen Light into the Pleroma. HAARDT states:

"In this aspect of the movement of the whole unrepeatable process toward the end lies the fundamental eschatological orientation of Gnosticism. The world process here is nowhere conceived as cyclical ¹⁾ . . . but always relates to a concluding Eschaton" ²⁾.

B. "The Resurrection"

Finally, a phenomenon is beginning to make its appearance in the new Gnostic literature which may call for a re-assessment of earlier conceptions that the post-mortem state of the Gnostic is describable solely in terms of an ascent of the bare "pneuma-self."

In the very interesting, if brief, Treatise on the Resurrection (CG I: 3), the author speaks of individual eschatology neither in terms of the escape of the bare "pneuma" from the physical body, nor as the survival of the carnal flesh—the flesh identical to that utilized during the earthly life. Rather, we are given the view of an ascension after death of the inward, invisible "members", covered by a new, spiritual "flesh" (cf. OnRes: CG I, 3: 47, 4-8; 47, 38-48, 3; 45,

¹⁾ This view stands in sharp contrast to that of JAN ZANDEE who understands Gnostic eschatology to be essentially cyclical: „Die Endzeit fällt zusammen mit der Urzeit." See his article, "Gnostische Eschatologie", mentioned in p. 143, n. 2; and in *Numen*, Vol. XI, Fasc. 1 (Jan., 1964), pp. 19, 41, 47, 49-51, 66-68.

²⁾ *Vom Messias zum Christus*, p. 231. English translation from the German is by the author.

39-46, 2).¹⁾ Furthermore, as the use of the appearances of Moses and Elijah in the Transfiguration Pericope of Mark ix 14 f. by the author to prove the truth of the resurrection shows (48, 3-11), he conceives the Gnostic pneumatic as retaining the identifiable characteristics of his earthly $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\kappa\acute{\iota}$ despite its transformed nature. Therefore, in that author's view, discontinuity between the earthly and the resurrected body is provided by the death of and departure from the external, visible members and flesh; whereas, continuity is furnished by the inner, spiritual man and a spiritual flesh which retains personally identifiable characteristics²⁾. Now, in fact, this interpretation of the form of the resurrection body seems a more faithful interpretation of the Pauline conception of such a body than does the interpretation of many of the early Heresiologists. We know for a fact, that is, that many of those Fathers of the Church in their struggle with Gnostic docetism and Platonic theories of an immortal soul, affirmed in a very "un-Pauline" fashion a crudely literal identity between the earthly, physical body and the flesh of the resurrected body³⁾. However, a decisive difference between Paul and the author of the Treatise on the Resurrection does appear in the latter's expectation of when such a transformed body shall rise, for it is immediately after death, and there is no eschatological reservation⁴⁾.

Other Gnostic texts also seem to support the expectation of some type of spiritualized resurrection ascent. Primarily one must think of the Gospel of Philip (especially Logion 23)⁵⁾ whose inconsistency

¹⁾ That this is the view of the "ascension" in the Treatise on the Resurrection is more fully demonstrated in the author's book, *The Epistle to Rheginos: A Valentinian Letter on the Resurrection*, pp. 143-9.

²⁾ This, too, is demonstrated in *ibid.*, p. 146 f.

³⁾ Disparity between the Pauline view of a spiritually transformed resurrection body and the Fathers' doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh has been amply demonstrated. See, e.g., ROBERT M. GRANT, "The Resurrection of the Body", *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. XXVIII (1948), pp. 124-130; and 188-208; and C. K. BARRETT, "Immortality and Resurrection", *The London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, Vol. CXC, Sixth Series, Vol. XXXIV (1965), pp. 96-102.

⁴⁾ On this "reservation" which was so crucial in early Christian eschatology, see JAMES M. ROBINSON, "Kerygma and History in the New Testament", *The Bible in Modern Scholarship: Papers Read at the 100th Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature*. December 28-30, 1964, ed. by J. PHILIP HYATT (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), pp. 122-127.

⁵⁾ The Coptic text and translation of this Logion are found in WALTER C. TILL's volume, *Das Evangelium nach Philippos* (Band 2, *Patristische Texte und Studien*; Berlin: Walter De Gruyter & Company, 1963), pp. 17-18.

on the question of the resurrection becomes somewhat more comprehensible when interpreted by reference to the conception contained in the Treatise on the Resurrection. But there are also other allusions to the resurrection in Gnostic literature. Cerinthus (*Adv. Haer.* I 26, 1) affirms in a seemingly paradoxical way: "Jesus suffered and was raised, but the Christ remained impassible, since he was spiritual." (Cf., also, the reports on Cerinthus' comments about the resurrection in Euseb., *Hist. Eccl.* iii 28. 2 and Epiphanius, *Pan.* xxviii 6.1). Also, we find this very interesting passage on the views of the Sethian Ophites (*Adv. Haer.* I 30):

"Christ did not forget what was his own, but from above sent into him a certain power which raised him (Jesus) in a body which was both psychic and spiritual; the worldly elements remained in the world. (He continues:)... he (the transformed Jesus) had risen again... nor did they (the disciples) recognize Christ by whose grace he (Jesus) rose from the dead. And the greatest error of the disciples was this, that they thought he rose in a worldly (material) body, and did not know that 'flesh and blood do not attain to the kingdom of God' " 1).

In addition, there are numerous passages in which the Gnostic is said to put on "another nature", or a "heavenly garment", or "bridal clothes", or some other type of clothing at the point of the departure of the pneuma-self from the body. Often such passages have been taken as referring to the Alter-Ego of the individual Gnostic self 2). But could not many such texts be understood as referring instead to the acquisition of some sort of "spiritualized resurrection body," such as we find in the Treatise on the Resurrection? The relevant texts include: The Naassene Exegesis on Adam (*Hipp., Ref.* 8, 6-9, 6), where the dead are spoken of as regenerated spiritual beings, and thus as resurrected; The Hymn of the Pearl (108, 9. 12-15; and 110, 46-47) 3), where mention is made of the

The view of resurrection present in Philip and in De Resurrectione have been further discussed by HANS-MARTIN SCHENKE in an article, "Auferstehungsglaube und Gnosis", *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche*, 59. Band; Heft 1/2 (1968), pp. 123-126.

1) The translation is taken from GRANT, *Gnosticism*, p. 58.

2) So JONAS interprets the "garment" mentioned in the Hymn of the Pearl. See his views in *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Second Edition; Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), pp. 55 f., 122 f.

3) References to the Hymn of the Pearl are based on the new translation and commentary prepared by A. F. J. KLIJN, *The Acts of Thomas: Introduction—Text—Commentary* (Vol. V, Supplements to *Novum Testamentum*; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1962), pp. 120-125.

“bright robe” that the son clothes himself with in returning from Egypt to his home country; The Gospel of Truth (CG I, 2: 20, 29-34), where the Saviour is said to have “clothed himself in incorruptibility”; Heracleon’s Exegesis of John (Frag. 40), where mention is made of the need for the perishable soul to put on an imperishable nature; the Letter of James (CG I, 1: 14, 34-36), in which Jesus in his ascent says that he will unclothe himself in order to be clothed; the Dialogue of the Saviour (CG III, 5: 136, 17-22), where the Saviour in heaven commands that two denuded souls being brought be given their garments (cf., also, in the same text, the references to “heavenly garments”—138, 14-139, 6); the Second Apocalypse of James (CG V, 4: 57, 10-24)¹), wherein the risen Christ is considered to have a clearly recognizable form; Authoritative Teaching (CG VI, 3: 32, 2-8. 30-34), where the soul is said to have an invisible spiritual body; the Paraphrase of Shem (CG VII, 1: 12, 25-33; 13, 35-14, 3), where special garments seem worn by those in the immortal state; the Second Treatise of the Great Seth (CG VII, 2), which speaks of the dead souls arising and putting on “the new man”; and, finally, the Apocalypse of Peter (CG VII, 3: 83, 1-10), in which Jesus explains that at the crucifixion he was actually standing by and laughing in his incorporeal “body of spirit”.

In all of these texts there seems reflected some desire to retain a sense of personal identity or personality in the post-mortem state, as opposed to a mystical yearning to be re-absorbed into the impersonal All.

IV. *The Detection of Gnostic Eschatology in the New Testament*

Having now completed the tasks of clarifying the traditional view of Gnostic eschatology and of comparing this view with evidence newly derived from the Gnostic writings themselves, we must now raise the question of whether any modifications are called for in those exegetical presuppositions usually held about such eschatology. It seems that four things may be said.

First, it should be obvious that it is precarious to assume any longer that wherever a strong emphasis on the realized aspects of eschatology appears, there we may detect Gnostic influence.

¹) For the text and translation of the Second Apocalypse of James, see BÖHLIG und LABIB, *Koptisch-Gnostische Apokalypsen aus Codex V*, pp. 56-85.

Rather, as has been demonstrated in the foregoing, there actually seems to exist a certain one-sided "already / not yet" tension in Gnostic eschatology. For while it is true that the immediate experience of eschatological hope is clearly emphasized in Gnostic texts which deal with the subject, such immediate experience is most often viewed within the context of a greater, futuristic goal, viz. the re-assembly of all sparks of light in the heavenly realm of Light or into the Godhead. Existentialist interpretation, in reducing all relevant data to the question of what does this mean for the individual and his self-understanding, has tended to neglect the cosmic and universal aspects of Gnostic eschatology. For had there not been such neglect, to cite but one example, BULTMANN might have been less inclined to attribute the minor futuristic eschatological references in the Fourth Gospel to an orthodox Ecclesiastical Redactor. This is because the presence of both realized and futuristic aspects of eschatology, with a decidedly one-sided emphasis on the former, places the thought of the Fourth Gospel closer to much of Gnostic eschatological thought than does the effort to strip away all futuristic references as secondary additions.

Second, it cannot be automatically supposed that "proto-Gnostic" denial of the resurrection (as some have detected at Corinth or in 2 Timothy ii 18) actually represents an affirmation of the survival-ascent of the bare "pneuma-self" at death. Nor can it simply be inferred that the goal of such an ascent is re-absorption into the Divine with the consequent loss of all personality. Indeed, as Part III B of the preceding study has sought to show, a number of Gnostics seem to have thought in terms of the survival of *some type* of "resurrection body" together with its identifiable personal characteristics. And, in our opinion, a tentative thesis begins to emerge which must await final confirmation from the remainder of the as-yet unknown Nag Hammadi texts, viz. that the more Christianized the form of Gnosticism, the more tendency there is to conceive the post-mortem state in terms of a "resurrection body" of some type.

Third, it has become evident that the form of Gnostic eschatology presupposed in New Testament exegesis has been too statically conceived. It is a well-known fact that most of those who have tried to demonstrate "proto-Gnostic" influences upon New Testament writers have been guided by the somewhat idealistic

presentation of Gnostic theologumena presented by HANS JONAS¹). Unfortunately, it has often been supposed that this "idealized form" of Gnosticism could be found from Philo to late Manichaeism and that wherever any particular theologumenon could be detected in a writing, one might assume the presence of others—even though unmentioned. Such a methodology, utilized by WALTER SCHMITHALS in his study of 1 Corinthians, 1-2 Thessalonians, and Galatians, has called forth the charge of "historischen Pangnostizismus" from scholars like CARSTEN COLPE²). But, indeed, one must raise the same question of ERNST KÄSEMANN. How is it possible to presuppose that the type of eschatological thought reflected in 2 Timothy ii 18 may be identified with the eschatological outlook presupposed in the Fourth Gospel, in the Corinthian Correspondence, in the Deutero-Paulines, and among the opponents mentioned in 2 Peter?³) Such a presupposition appears to take too little into account both the considerable time lapse between the earliest and latest of these writings and the fact that even "proto-Gnosticism" was a growing, changing entity. And, as Nag Hammadi is reminding us with ever-increasing emphasis, nuances in historical development—even in Gnosticism—are important!

A fourth and final thing to be said is that there is a pressing need to devise an acceptable methodology for the detection of "proto-Gnostic" influences or opponents in the New Testament. It must be granted that many consider such an effort ill-directed in that we have no texts reflecting the full development of Gnosticism which can be clearly dated prior to the emergence of Christianity or even in the first century A.D. But just as form critics have long been aware of the fact that the birth of an idea and its first appearance in writing are clearly separable in time from one another, so it is necessary to acknowledge that many Gnostic texts reflect systems older than the texts in which they now appear.

¹) JONAS' idealistic presentation is found in its most succinct form in his *The Gnostic Religion*, pp. 43-46; and in his article on "Gnosticism" in *A Handbook of Christian Theology*, MARVIN HALVERSON and ARTHUR A. COHEN, Editors (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1958), pp. 144-147.

²) See his comments in *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule: Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes vom gnostischen Erlösmythus* (*Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments*; Neue Folge, 60. Heft; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961), p. 64.

³) For more on KÄSEMANN's view, see *supra*, p. 148 n. 1 and 3. It is notable that KÄSEMANN is inclined to use the term "Hellenistic Enthusiasts" for those formerly described by the BULTMANN School as "Gnostics".

Further, now that the non-Christian origins of Gnosticism seem to have been reasonably established ¹⁾, it seems mandatory that we remain open to the possibility of proto-Gnostic developments. But in the effort to detect "proto-Gnosticism" in the New Testament, it seems imperative that the older method of presupposing what Gnosticism ideally was, projecting this idealistic system back into the first century, and then proceeding to find its traces must be discarded. Instead, there must be new effort to work back genetically from second and third century conceptions to the New Testament, seeking in the latter for conceptions similar to those in later Gnosticism and giving full attention to the nuances now appearing in Nag Hammadi literature. The strongest arguments for "proto-Gnosticism" in the New Testament, then, would be those which located several Gnostic theologumena in a particular writing and found these to be related to one another in characteristically "Gnostic fashion and synthesis", i.e. as they are related in second and third century Gnostic texts. Such demonstrations would be far more convincing than have been the simple appeals to parallels which have been dominant in past research.

¹⁾ Such, at least, is the thrust of a majority of studies on Gnostic origins read at the Messina Colloquium. See BIANCHI, *The Origins of Gnosticism*, passim. The comment of GILLES QUISPEL, *Gnosis als Welt Religion* (Zürich: Origo Verlag, 1951), p. 5, is representative: "Dass die Gnosis in Wesen und Ursprung *nicht* christlich ist, wird immer klarer; ob sie aber auch *vorchristlich* ist, muss noch bewiesen werden."